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ABSTRACT

The teacher performance evaluation, mandated in Missouri by a bill that legislators enacted during 1983, is a process for professional development through the identification and documentation of job related expectations and skills, and an opportunity to improve skill and job related decisionmaking. To determine the degree of implementation and the impact of performance evaluation procedures across the state, in 1986 one half of Missouri's superintendents were mailed a four-page survey. Usable responses were received from 219 of the 272 districts selected. Results indicate that: (1) by the 1985-86 school year, 98 percent of the districts used a performance-based teacher evaluation (PBTE) system; (2) committees of teachers and administrators were used 52 percent of the time for PBTE system development and implementation; (3) essentially identical systems to the state PBTE model were used by 85 percent of the respondents; and (4) the majority of the respondents believed that PBTE will help improve instruction and student achievement over the next five years. (KM)

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Performance-Based Teacher Evaluation in Missouri: A Three Year Report

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Performance-Based Teacher Evaluation in Missouri:
A Three Year Report

"Performance evaluation is a process for professional development through the identification of job related expectations, documentation of skills regarding those expectations, conferencing regarding skill level, opportunity to improve skill and job-related decision-making." For three school years, educators across Missouri have attended workshops, read articles, reviewed evaluation manuals and studied state recommended models describing performance evaluation in those terms. But to what degree and with what impact are performance evaluation procedures for teachers and principals being implemented across the state? To answer those questions, superintendents in each of the school districts in the state were surveyed in the summer of 1986. The questions asked focused upon when, and if, the district implemented performance evaluation, what procedures were used to develop the performance evaluation systems, what specific steps are a part of the process, how much training have evaluators received, what are the attitudes of teachers and principals about the process and to what degree will performance evaluation positively impact upon education over the next several years. In essence, the answers to these types of questions portray a clear picture of performance evaluation and it's impact across the state.

Performance Evaluation Legislation

In the spring of 1983, the Missouri legislators enacted a bill mandating "comprehensive performance evaluation for each teacher" in Missouri. The legislation further stated that the "State Department of Elementary and Secondary Education shall provide suggested procedures for such an evaluation." Acting upon that legislative mandate, Commissioner of Education, Arthur Mallory, appointed a 24 person performance evaluation committee. That committee was charged with the responsibility of studying performance evaluation procedures and effective teaching skills and then developing a "model" performance evaluation system for teachers that could be studied by districts as they developed and adopted their own plans. By the spring of 1984, the "Missouri PBTE Model" was in the hands of educators across the state and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education was providing initial inservice workshops throughout the state. Those "beginning" workshops in the spring of 1984 were followed by "advanced" workshops in fall of 1984 and the spring of 1985. Additional workshops for "new" principals and "experienced" principals were conducted throughout the 1985-86 school year under the auspices of the newly created Missouri Leadership Academy. During the first three years, over two thousand persons, primarily principals, participated in the series of Performance-Based Teacher Evaluation (PBTE) workshops.

Survey Procedures

As stated previously, the survey data for this study were collected during the summer of 1986. PBTE legislation had been in effect for three school years. At the time of the survey, the state performance evaluation model for teachers had been disseminated to school systems for nearly two and a half years.

To gather data, half of the superintendents in the state were mailed a four page survey. Useable surveys were returned by 219 of the 272 districts, an 81% response rate. These useable returns represent a large enough number of districts to generalize the findings to all the districts in the state.

In a cover letter accompanying the survey, superintendents were asked to delegate the survey to the most knowledgeable person in the district regarding performance evaluation if the superintendent did not feel sufficiently informed to complete the survey. Eighty-nine percent of the surveys were completed by superintendents, 19% were delegated, typically to assistant superintendents. Forty-one percent of the responding districts were classified as AAA, 57% as AA and 2% were unclassified. Student enrollment in the responding districts ranged from twenty-six students to over forty thousand students.

Understanding the directions given at the beginning of the surveys permits better interpretation of the survey data. The directions were: "Performance based teacher evaluation (PBTE) in our state has commonly been defined as 'a process for the professional development of teachers through the identification of job related expectations, documentation of skills regarding those expectations, conferencing regarding skill level, opportunity to improve skill and job-related decision-making.' Please respond to the following questions with that definition in mind."

Degree of Implementation

Twenty-four percent of the respondents indicated their districts used a performance based evaluation system for teachers during the 1983-84 school year, the first year of the legislative mandate. That percentage rose to 84% for the 1984-85 school year and 98% for the 1985-86 school year. Seventeen percent of the respondents indicated their districts had PBTE procedures in place prior to 1983. As depicted in Table I, performance evaluation procedures were more likely to have been in place in AAA districts prior to the legislation. These data, as well as other observations by the writers, support the conclusion that smaller, more rural districts in the state employed minimal PBTE procedures prior to 1983, while the larger, more suburban districts were more likely to have been using some PBTE practices. The smaller, more rural districts appeared to more quickly embrace the state mandate and model and implement comprehensive performance evaluation procedures while the larger, more suburban districts more slowly reviewed the mandates and modified existing procedures.

PERCENT OF DISTRICTS USING PBTE
n=219

YEAR	All Districts	AAA	AA	U
1985-86	98%	96%	100%	100%
1984-85	84	85	83	75
1983-84	24	27	20	25
prior to 1983	17	25	12	25

Procedures Used to Adopt PBTE Systems

The process by which PBTE is developed and implemented is critical to the on-going success of the system. The state model recommends the system be cooperatively developed by teachers and administrators. Professional associations throughout the state have supported this basic premise of working together to develop a meaningful system.

Each respondent was asked to describe the process their district used if they developed a new or refined evaluation process since the 1983 legislative mandate. Fifty-two percent of the districts used committees of teachers and administrators, the typically recommended procedure. One percent used committees of teachers only. Thirty-seven percent of the districts adopted procedures without teacher input, including 30% of the districts where the superintendent and board adopted the state model as written without seeking formal input from teachers or building administrators.

Characteristics of PBTE Models in Use

The models that were adopted in the districts across the state generally resemble the PBTE model developed by the state PBTE committee. Eighty-five percent of the respondents described their PBTE systems as "essentially identical to the state PBTE model." Ten percent said they used similar procedures, but noticeably different criteria and descriptors. Five percent said the criteria and descriptors were similar, but the procedures were different. One percent described their PBTE plans as not similar to the state model. Plans for AA and U districts were more likely to be identical to the state model than AAA districts, where the procedures were different from the state model for 16% of the districts.

Respondents from each district with a self-described PBTE plan were asked to identify the basic components in their plan. Ninety-seven percent of the plans included "scheduled observations" and 95% included "unscheduled observations." Eighty-five percent required pre-observation

worksheets for scheduled observations, 91% required a pre-observation conference before a classroom observation. Nearly all districts, 98%, required notetaking during observations and post-observation conferences; however, only 87% require the observation notes be transferred to a feedback form for the conference. Ninety-seven percent of the districts use job targets or other improvement plans. A summative evaluation report is required by 97% of the districts.

When analyzed by district classification, differences were almost non-existent. The only notable exceptions were that AAA districts were slightly less likely to use pre-observation worksheets while AA districts were less likely to use job targets or improvement plans and summative evaluation reports.

From the above described characteristics, it is evident the state recommended procedures have greatly influenced the evaluation procedures in the state. But there are some interesting exceptions to the state recommended procedures. For example, state model procedures indicate the importance of a teacher being well informed of their skill on job related expectations. The purpose of the formative feedback form is to communicate performance on those expectations (criteria). Nearly all districts require notetaking during observations, but less than nine of ten require those notes be transferred to a feedback form reflective of the expectations. Another example is that some districts do not require a pre-observation conference prior to a scheduled observation. Again, this detracts from one of the more significant outcomes of PBTE, increased principal-teacher communication. Perhaps educators using those practices should be more sensitive to "short cuts" that save a few minutes of an administrator's time but sacrifice quality and potential impact of the program.

The summative evaluation is a synthesis of all evaluative data since the previous summative evaluation, regardless of the length of the evaluative cycle. State law requires that each probationary teacher be evaluated each year, but does not specify how frequently evaluations for tenured teachers must be written. The state model suggests a summative evaluation every third year for tenured teachers. Forty percent of the districts indicated they require a summative evaluation each year for each tenured teacher, 13% require one every other year and 46% complete a summative evaluation every third year. One percent require summatives less frequently than every third year.

Throughout the development of the state PBTE model and the inservice workshops, the basic philosophy of PBTE being a process for professional growth was stressed. A majority of the time and energy, perhaps as much as 90-95% of the efforts, associated with PBTE should be placed on the formative phase and a small percent on the summative phase. The formative phase is that portion where true professional growth takes place, the summative is the legal mandate associated with job-related decision-making. During the 1985-86 school year, 97% of the districts did not dismiss a tenured teacher. Two percent of the districts dismissed approximately one percent of their tenured teachers and one percent of the districts dismissed more that one percent of their tenured teachers. We obviously do not know whether this minimal dismissal rate is a commentary

about the philosophy of PBTE, the perceived difficulty of dismissing tenured teachers, the high quality of teachers, the low level of administrative expectations, or any combinations of the above or other plausible explanations.

The non-renewal rate for probationary teachers in Missouri school districts was slightly higher. Sixty-four percent of the districts did not non-renew a probationary teacher, 11% non-renewed one percent of their probationary teachers, 9% non-renewed two percent and 6% of the districts non-renewed approximately three percent of their probationary teachers. The remaining school systems non-renewed slightly higher percentages. To place this in perspective is difficult because of the varying sizes of the school systems and the relatively few numbers of probationary teachers. As with the dismissal of tenured teachers, we do not know whether this reflects upon the philosophy of PBTE or any of several other plausible reasons.

In districts where teachers were dismissed or non-renewed, respondents were asked to estimate the typical number of ratings "below expected performance" on the summative evaluations of teachers who were dismissed or non-renewed. The most common responses were 3 (17% of the districts), 4 (26%), 5 (14%) and 6 to 10 (26%). The typical number of "below" ratings for a person dismissed was in the four, five and six range, with four being the most common response. One percent of the districts dismissed teachers without giving ratings below expected performance. That procedure clearly defies the basic philosophy of PBTE as stressed by the state PBTE committee through the state model and presented in DESE workshops across the state from 1984 to the present.

The professional improvement plan, commonly referred to in the Missouri PBTE Model as a job target, is the growth plan for a teacher. Recommended state PBTE procedures indicate "a rating below expected performance should have been <u>preceded</u> by efforts to improve that performance through the use of job targets." Respondents were asked if their district's PBTE process required that a job target or professional improvement plan be in place to assist a teacher before the teacher is rated "below expected performance" on the Summative Evaluation Report. Seventy percent of the districts have that requirement, thirty percent do not. This finding is of particular concern. The issue of fairness and ethics could easily be compromised in districts not requiring opportunity to improve before being given a sub-par rating on the summative form. Teacher attitude is easily jeopardized by the lack of such guidelines, and with negative teacher attitude, PBTE will be less effective. The process of giving summative ratings below expected performance without preceding the rating with a job target and opportunity to improve is neither congruent with the process recommended by the state committee through the state PBTE model nor consistent with the process presented in the DESE workshops presented across the state.

Building administrators, principals and assistant principals, were the persons responsible for evaluating teachers in 99% of the districts. Student input was not a part of the evaluation process in 75% of the districts, though teachers were encouraged to seek student input about their effectiveness in 12% of the districts and in 11% the evaluators sometimes surveyed students and used those data as a part of the evaluation process. Use of parent input

followed a similar pattern, with 81% not seeking parent input as a part of the process, 5% encouraging parent input to the teacher and 11% sometimes surveying parents as a basic part of the process. Only 3% of the districts used peer evaluation as a part of the process.

The performance evaluation procedures for teachers were purposefully designed so that with minor adjustments to criteria and descriptors, the process could be used for counselors, librarians and other teachers with unique job responsibilities. Sixty-nine percent of the districts reported using different criteria for non-traditional teachers. Sixty-five percent used different criteria for librarians, 64% for counselors and 13% for special education teachers.

Inservice Training in PBTE

As stated in the opening paragraphs, numerous workshops on PBTE have been provided by the department of elementary and secondary education in the past three years. Nearly all districts have taken advantage of training opportunities (98%). The department of elementary and secondary was the primary training agency, serving needs in 91% of the districts. Twenty-five percent of the districts also reported using a private consultant to train their principals and 28% said they used central office administrators to train their principals. Since the trainings conducted by DESE included several hundred central office administrators, those central office administrators probably received their training from the Department of education workshops. Nine percent of the districts also reported training from other sources such as university classes and professional organization workshops.

Research indicates that effective skill development in PBTE takes the equivalent of several days of training. Administrators in Missouri have apparently noted this need, with the typical number of days being two (30% of the districts) and three (23%). Fourteen percent provided 4 days for their principals and 24 percent provided 5 or more days. Nine percent of the districts provided 1 day of training.

On a scale of one to five, with one being "not skilled," three being "moderately skilled," and five being "highly skilled," 97% of the respondents rated their principals as moderately skilled or higher. Specifically, the percentages of ratings from one to five were: 1% rated one, 2% rated two, 40% rated three, 51% rated four and 6% rated five.

As would be expected, noticeable interrelationships appeared among the issues of whether principals had PBTE inservice, by whom they were trained and for how long they were trained. Principals with inservice training were perceived by their superiors as being more skilled. Training by a private consultant was more directly related to principal skill than training by the superintendent or DESE. That factor is probably associated with the fact that consultants usually work with smaller groups and for longer time durations. Length of training was also highly correlated to the degree of principal skill in PBTE.

Teacher Attitude

Respondents were asked to describe the attitudes of teachers about

PBTE. Most respondents described teacher attitudes as positive. The specific numbers were 1% for "very negative," 8% for "somewhat negative," 17% for "indifferent," 55% for "somewhat positive," and 19% for "very positive."

Teacher attitudes were slightly more positive in AAA districts and districts using a three year evaluation cycle. Attitudes were clearly more positive in districts which developed their PBTE system with teacher involvement and clearly more negative where the administration determined the process without teacher input. As would be expected, the attitudes of teachers were most positive in districts where principals had more PBTE training and were more highly skilled in the PBTE procedures.

Educational Impact

The so-called bottom line in education is improved learning for students. Therefore, respondents were asked two questions about the impact of PBTE on instructional improvement and student achievement. Both questions forced a Likert-type rating from one for "not helpful" to five for "very helpful," with three as the mid-point of "moderately helpful." The first question read: "Over the next five years, to what degree do you believe PBTE will help improve instruction?" Three percent of the respondents rated the question as a two, 34% as a three, 45% a four and 18% a five. With a mean rating (3.8) well above the mid-point and all ratings being in the "somewhat" to "very helpful" range, it is apparent that educators view PBTE as having the potential to impact positively upon instructional improvement in the classroom.

Does it then hold that instructional improvement in the classroom will result in improved student achievement? The second question asked was: "Over the next five years, to what degree do you believe PBTE will help improve student achievement?" Eight percent selected a two on the one to five scale, 39% a three, 42% a four and 11% a five. Again, all responses were in the "somewhat" to "very helpful" range with the mean response of 3.6 noticeably above the mid-point on the scale.

Both of these questions were viewed more positively by respondents from districts that utilized job targets for professional improvement. Relationships also existed between the degree of principal inservice and the skill of principals in PBTE and each of the "impact" questions. And as would be assumed, there was a significant relationship between teacher attitudes and the "impact" questions. In other words, the more inservice the principals received, the more skilled the principals were in PBTE and the more positive the teacher attitudes toward PBTE, the greater was the potential for positive instructional improvement and student learning.

The process for performance evaluation designed by the Missouri State Performance Evaluation Committee, and being implemented in most school systems across the state, is unique in its state-wide commitment to development of personnel as a primary focus of evaluation. The results of this three year study indicate this focus has begun to pay dividends to the students of the state. In addition, most key educators believe it will continue to provide improved teaching and learning for the state.